

PLANTAIN (*Plantago rugelii*
and *P. lanceolata*)

FLOWERS: April - October

DESCRIPTION: Basal leaves,
parallel-appearing veins.
Flower stalk holds
terminal spikes.
Plantain Family.

HABITAT: Dry soils,
pastures, lawns, fields,
gardens, waste grounds,
roadsides

42 LOCATION: Scattered
statewide

COLLECTION: April - August

USES: Potherb, salad, tea



Plantain is a common plant which makes a nuisance of itself in yards and gardens. There are two most common varieties. One has a narrow, long leaf while the other has a rounder, wider leaf. The narrow leaf, or English plantain, has a white flower cluster while the common plantain sends up green flower spikes. Missouri has eleven different plantain species listed.

The leaves, when young, give another wild lettuce addition to a wild salad. Since the plant multiplies easily, new growth may be found over long periods of time. The young leaves are also a welcome addition to your greens mess. However, since plantain doesn't need much cooking, nor much water when fixing, it is best when fixed alone. The best method is to "Chinese it" — to boil it quickly in very little water until tender yet still a bit crunchy.

A tea may be made from steeping several leaves in a cup of boiling water for 3-4 minutes. The taste is pretty bad, but it is high in vitamins A and C. As a matter of fact, I've read that a strong tea made from plantain leaves is soothing, was considered helpful for diarrhea, bedwetting and ridding the body of worms. Applied externally as a poultice, plantain tea was used to aid healing of insect bites, snakes bites, boils and the like.

Kirk states that the seeds may be eaten parched or ground into a meal. I've found the raw seed not unlike wheat germ in taste, which I assume may be the reason behind one of the nicknames, Indian Wheat.

I understand that the seeds may be soaked in a teaspoon of hot water and used as a laxative. If this is a concern of yours when camping, as it is with me, try it. It hasn't proven to be effective yet, but I'm increasing the amounts of the seeds each time.

As a salad, the young leaves are very good. I use an oil-vinegar dressing on most of my wild salads.

Rid your yard of plantain by eating heartily in the early spring! I rather imagine it would not thrive so if the leaves remained tender longer.

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BEDSTRAW (*Galium* species)

FLOWERS: May - July

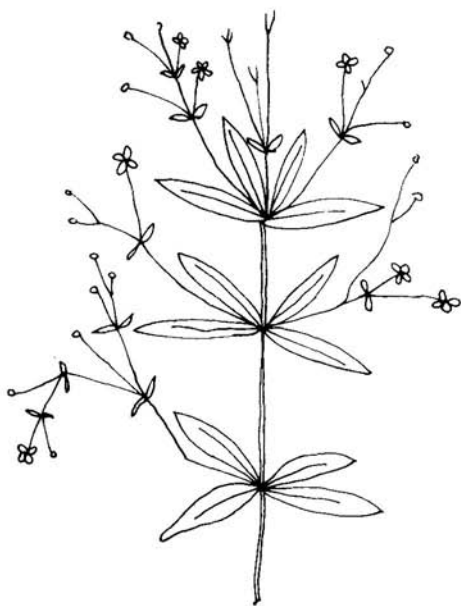
DESCRIPTION: See Steyermark for species variation. Madder Family.

HABITAT: Valleys, rich or moist woodland, thickets, waste ground, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: March - July

USES: Potherb, salad, coffee substitute



Some interesting facts can be dug up concerning bedstraw. Some sources indicate it was the sweet smelling hay used in the manger at Bethlehem. An herb doctor of days gone by recommended that stout women include bedstraw in their diet to encourage a lanky, thin figure. It was once used as a spring tonic to purify the blood and the root was used as a hair dye.

Whatever its past, bedstraw makes a potherb worthy of dieting. With that as a main course, I feel certain I'd lose weight, too!

On the other hand, gathered quite young and added to a tossed salad, bedstraw is an asset.

While I haven't tried the coffee, a substitute beverage is reportedly made from the roasted seeds of cleavers or goosegrass variety. This species makes a tangled jungle in moist woods, sprawling all over. The "hitch-hiker" seed clings easily to man or beast. Coffee made from this seed is said to have an aroma much like that of regular coffee. Perhaps this isn't so strange as bedstraw belongs to the same botanical family as coffee.

The species I've enjoyed most in a fresh tossed salad is the small, delicate species that is found thick on the woodland floor — *Galium concinnum*. This is an ornamental plant that is attractive when dried and used in winter arrangements.

BLACK HAW BERRIES

(*Viburnum prunifolium*,
V. rufidulum)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Large shrubs or small trees with opposite leaves which are entire or finely toothed, oval or oblong shaped. Flowers form large clusters on ends of branches. Fruits are usually elongate, sometimes spherical.

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HABITAT: Rocky stream banks, base and edge of bluffs, thickets, rocky or dry woods

LOCATION: *V. prunifolium* — statewide;
V. rufidulum — Ozark region of southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: August - September

USES: field nibble, sauce possibility



The only use I have made of this edible is as a field nibble. The seeds are large with a sweet, dry pulp. This berry when ripe has a bluish or blackish coloring.

Fernald and Kinsey indicate that the cooked pulp has little appeal, but experiments are in order for adding a tart fruit to it. Apple-black haw berry sauce, anyone?

ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus canadensis*)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Shrub, lacy white flower umbels. Leaves, 2-5 pairs of toothed, opposite leaflets, single leaf at stalk tip. Honeysuckle Family.

HABITAT: Open woods, thickets, streams, fence-rows, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: June - July, flowers; July, green berries; August - September, berries

USES: Fritters, muffins, wine, pickle, pie, fruit, jelly, syrup, tea



CAUTION: See page 227

I tend to associate elderberry with arsenic and old lace and therefore consider it a plant to approach with caution. That, coupled with stories of the stems being poisonous to some, gave even more reason to proceed cautiously.

I now am an avid elderberry supporter. The flower heads, which form large umbels, are easily gathered. The first year of my wild foraging, I was out picking elderberry flowers when my daughter exclaimed, "I tell you what, *this* family's DOOMED!!" That quote is a family favorite and somewhat akin to the "CHARGE!" at a football game!

The entire flowering umbel can be dipped in a batter and fried for a tasty fritter. To fix the fritter, make a batter of 1 cup flour, 1 t baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ t salt, 1 cup milk, 1 egg, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup corn oil. Dip the washed and dried flowers in the batter and place in a hot skillet. I snip off the heavy stems after I've put it in the skillet. Fry on both sides, drain on a paper towel, squeeze orange or lemon juice over the fritter and roll in powdered sugar.

The flowerlets can be rubbed off and used in pancakes, waffles or muffin batters, which adds an enticing flavor to the end result. Use any batter recipe and add the flowerettes from 6 clusters to it. Regardless of whether you use the entire flowering head or the individual flowerettes, I'm sure you'll like all recipes. The flowers also make a tea which is prepared by drying the flowers and boiling them in a cup of hot water for 3-5 minutes.

A wine, called Elderberry Blow Wine, also made from flower-heads, is an interesting endeavor. Place $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon elderberry flowers in a 3-gallon crock. Add 10 cups of sugar and fill the crock with water to within 1 inch of the top. Float a cake of yeast on top. Let this set for nine days. Add one pound of raisins to each of three gallon jugs. White raisins give a golden wine, dark raisins a darker wine. Fill the jugs with the liquid from the crock. Cap with cotton wads and let settle for six months. Strain off the clear liquid and place in dark bottles.

As the flowers die, the little green berries begin forming. These may be pickled in your dill crock with other wild pickling goodies such as redbud pods, cattail shoots, poke stems, green-brier, purslane, live-forever. Check page 7 for dill crock.

The berries become purple and ripe in August and September. Again, these are easily picked by breaking off the entire umbel. The fresh berry has an unpleasant taste which seems to be remedied by adding lemon juice or vinegar when baking in a pie. A good pie recipe: Make a crust and put in a pint of elderberries that have been stemmed and washed. Sprinkle in 1 cup sugar, 1 t salt, 1 t flour, 1 t lemon or vinegar juice, 1 T water and place several dabs of butter on top. Cover with a top crust and bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes or until browned.

Drying takes out the disagreeable flavor. The berries dried on an old screen frame and turned occasionally produce a supply for the entire winter with no problem. They are delicious as a blueberry substitute in a muffin, pancake or waffle. Elderberry muffins are something else! Cream 1 cup sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oleo. Add 1 cup milk, 1 egg, 1 t nutmeg, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, $\frac{1}{8}$ t salt, 2 t baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ t cinnamon, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup wheat germ, 3 T molasses, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried elderberries. Stir only until blended, bake at 425 degrees for 20-25 minutes in muffin pan.

The dried berries may be added in a cake batter, used in chutney, or in a pie.

The jelly is delicious either straight or with sumac or wild grapes with it. To make the jelly, cover the berries with water and boil gently for 10 minutes. Pour off the liquid and add equal amounts of sugar and one package of pectin per four cups. A syrup is made if the pectin is omitted and the liquid allowed to thicken slightly.

The most famous of elderberry wines is made from the ripe berries.





CORN SALAD (*Valerianella radiata*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Branching stalk, small terminal flowers. Base of opposite leaves attach directly to stem. Basal leaves in spring. Valerian Family.

HABITAT: Waste ground, field borders, roadsides

LOCATION: South and central Missouri

COLLECTION: April - June

USES: Salad, vegetable

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Corn salad comes at a time when the earth is ripe with wild salad material and, therefore, is often passed over during the selections. It is mild and a fitting addition to the salad bowl. It is an easy addition, but small and doesn't add fast bulk — so what else is new? A wild salad might as well have a large source of ingredients. Don't overlook this the next time. I often try to see how many different plants I can find to go into the salad.

I have tried corn salad boiled as a vegetable and can recommend its continued use in the tossed salads!

PUSSY TOES (*Antennaris neglecta*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Basal leaves, whitish and parallel-like veins, plantain-like. Flowerheads have antennae. Composite Family.

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - June

USES: gum

50



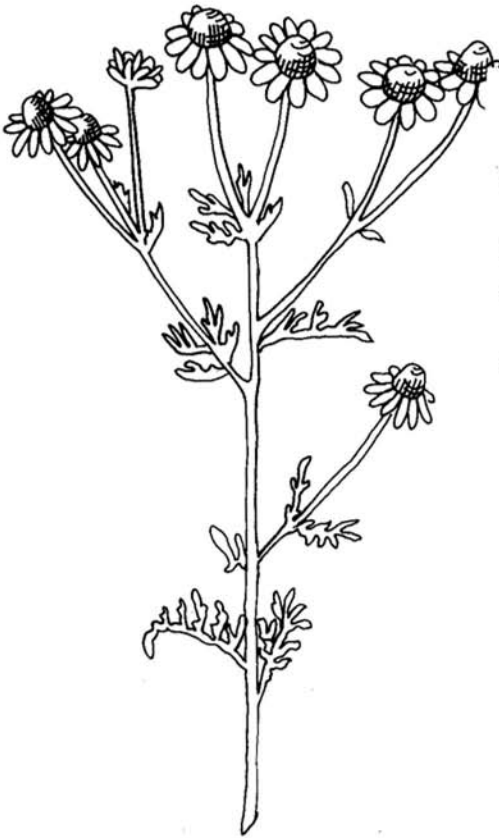
The young stems and stalks of this ground cover may be chewed to get a nourishing gum substance. While I cannot get "gum," the juice is agreeable to suck and chew.

Two nicknames, Ladies' Tobacco and Indian Tobacco, gives reason to think that the plant might well have been a tobacco substitute. As a non-smoker, I'll not try.

CHAMOMILE (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Fernlike,
short leaves, daisy-like
flower. Composite
Family.



HABITAT: Wastelands, road-
sides, railroads

LOCATION: St. Louis area

COLLECTION: May -
October

USES: Tea

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This plant resembles a small daisy with its flower, but the leaves are more fernlike and airy. A tea made from it may be used to treat an upset stomach or a fever. Dried leaves and flower heads make a medicinal-tasting tea. It is intended to aid digestion and act as a "calming" influence on the body.

OX-EYE DAISY (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)

FLOWERS: May - August

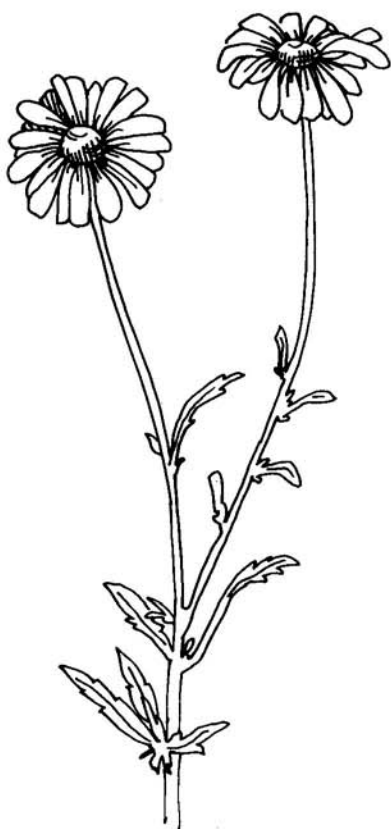
DESCRIPTION: Stalked, lobed basal leaves, stem leaves alternate, thin, toothed. Flower has white rays radiating from the yellow center disc. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Fields, meadows, pastures, prairies, roadsides, waste ground

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May - August

USES: Salad



The daisy is one of my favorite flowers. The beauty of it alone would be reason enough to justify its existence. The white petals are pretty additions to a salad, and the leaves in the salad are attractive with their deeply cut lobes.

Fernald and Kinsey reports the odor of the plant is such that the taste for the leaves must be an acquired one. I found them very passable in the early summer as a single taste and most acceptable in a mixed wild salad.